

AWFUL STORY OF DISASTER TOLD BY SURVIVORS.

SCENE ON NORTH BROTHER ISLAND, THE BEACH STREWN WITH BODIES.

From Photograph Taken for The Evening World by Photographer Curtis.



When The Evening World reporters reached North Brother Island the green sward was covered with the dead and rescued. Women and children who a few minutes before were enjoying the prospects of a happy holiday

were rusing back and forth across the island crying and calling for friends or lost ones. The scene on the island was most heart rending. Workmen on the island had abandoned their labors to aid in comforting the stricken ones.

Mothers huddled their children about them and boys and girls who had lost their parents in the fire or water ran frantically hither and thither among the rescued, gazing into every face in the hope of finding a loved one. These children even went to the heartrending extent of examining

the faces of the line of dead, fearful that numbered among them were those for whom they sought. The police arrived with remarkable promptness on the island, and with the assistance of citizens and laborers did all in their power to comfort those on the island.

RESCUED TELL HOW LIVES WERE SAVED

Many Deeds of Heroism Described by Excursionists—Boy of 13 Shields a Little Girl with His Own Small Body When People Fell on Them.

George Gray, thirteen years old, of No. 309 East Fourteenth street, one of the survivors, tells the following story of his experience:

"I was sitting on the rear of the upper deck with my two friends, Otto Hans, of No. 310 East Fourteenth street, and Albert Greenwall, of No. 325 East Fourteenth street. The boat was just passing out of Hell Gate and going toward an island when I smelled fire.

"I said to Otto and Albert, 'Hey, boys, there's a fire,' and we jumped up on a seat and tried to pull down some life-preservers.

"A lot of them were rotten and all the cork came out of them. Women and children around us were yelling something awful. While we were pulling at the life-preservers a big cloud of smoke and flame came right up out of the centre of the boat. Then the boat seemed to stop, and the women began jumping overboard, and I saw some of them throw their babies in the water and jump after them.

"After the fire came all up around the deck the boat got started again, but the people kept jumping over. There wasn't any tug boats near us then, but soon I saw a lot coming for us. I was afraid to jump over and got Otto and Albert to stay with me.

"We all had got life preservers for ourselves and for three little girls who we held on to when they tried to jump.

WATER FILLED WITH STRUGGLING PEOPLE.

"While we were working getting the life-preservers the tugs were coming at us fast, but all back of us in the water I could see men, women and children going down. Most of them couldn't swim at all, and went right down as soon as they jumped over.

"The first tug that came to us was the Director. It was a big boat and came right up near us as we were going toward the island.

"I jumped onto the boat, and then a whole crowd of people jumped on top of me. Half of them that jumped on the boat fell into the water between the side of the tug and the steamer.

MAN FLINGS BABY OVERBOARD.

"Pretty soon there were so many on her that her rear end was way down in the water and her bow way up in the air, but they kept on jumping and slipping into the river and going down. I got a hold of a little girl's leg who was falling over, pulled her up and sat on her so as to keep her from being pushed over.

"As I was on the boat I saw a man on the upper deck take a baby and throw it into the water. The baby's hair was all on fire and she fell in the water near the tug and a man jumped over and got her and brought her on to the Director.

BOATS PICK UP SEVEN GIRLS.

"As the tugs came around the boat everybody that was left tried to jump on them, and they jumped on top of each other, lots of them rolling off the decks of the tugs into the water. I saw a lot of young girls swimming towards the island who were picked up by rowboats.

"I saw two little girls who hadn't life-preservers on, but who could swim, sink when a wave made by one of the tugs rolled over them. The women and the kids were crying and yelling so that you couldn't hear the shouts of the men who had come on the tugs to rescue us.

"I saw about ten men jump overboard long before the tugs came and not one of them could swim. They were shouting for help and they all went down. After the Director had so many on her that I thought she was going to sink or turn over, she steamed for the New York shore where we got off and a lot of us were taken in wagons to the Elevated road."

BRAVE BOY SAVES YOUNG GIRL.

John Tishner, thirteen years old, of No. 404 Fifth street, another survivor, describes his experiences and his rescue as follows:

"I was down on the lower deck with Ida Wousky, fourteen years old, who lives in the same house with me. We were eating ice cream when the flames burst out right near us. Everybody seemed to be yelling fire and I

saw a lot of women with their hair and dresses burning jump into the water long before any boats came near us.

"My friend, Ida Wousky, was going to faint, but I kicked her in the shins and waked her up. Then I got a lot of life preservers most of them rotten and after a long time I got one on Ida.

"The tugs were coming near us then and I told her to jump. She wouldn't jump and I pushed her over. Then I jumped in the water myself and I got hold of her hair and held her up until the tug came and we were pulled out.

WOMEN THROW BABIES INTO WATER.

"I guess I saw more than two hundred people jump over on my side of the boat ten minutes before the tugs, rowboats and launches came anywhere near us. I couldn't see on the other side of the boat, but I could hear them screaming and I could hear the splashes in the water as they jumped overboard.

"After I first saw the smoke and flames there was a terrible rush of people to the rear of the boat. They were pushing and pulling each other until those near the railing were crowded over in the water, falling on top of each other as they landed in the river. I saw a lot of women throw their babies overboard and then fall after them. Most of these women were drowned.

"There was a lot of my friends on the boat. Some of them were rescued and some of them I didn't see after we got ashore. Harry Gambacher, of No. 404 Fifth street, Mrs. Gross, George Gross and two little girls of No. 90 First avenue, were eating ice cream together when the fire started. I saw George Gross get some life preservers for them and then when the smoke came up that was the last I saw of them.

GIRL SWIMS ASHORE WITH BABY.

"Another friend of mine, Paul Kasner, fourteen years old, who lives on First avenue, between Fifth and Sixth streets, was near me when the fire started. I saw him get a life-preserver and jump off. He was picked up by a tugboat.

"I saw a lot of girls that lived near me get life-preservers and jump into the water long before the tugs came. They were all swimmers and got ashore. One of the girls I saw swim all the way in with a baby.

"I guess I saw fifty babies in the water before the tugboats came, and the men and women were jumping in on top of them. When they got the tug to the New York shore a man took me in a buggy to the elevated station and I went home and told my mother that I wasn't drowned."

GIRL SLIDES DOWN POLE TO WATER.

Miss Marie Kreuger, of No. 451 West End avenue, who was rescued and taken to the Harlem Hospital, said:

"I was sitting on the upper deck when there was a cry of fire. Men came among us and told us to be quiet. The women and children were panic stricken. I slid down a pole to the water and held on by a rope on the side of the boat.

"The flames began to shoot out of the portholes and I had to let go. A little boy was near me holding to a life preserver. A coal barge was near and a deck hand threw us a rope, which we got and were pulled aboard the coal barge.

"I saw my cousin and sister, but they disappeared. An ambulance with Dr. Krauskopf, of Harlem Hospital, came along and brought us here."

William Payne, the colored man who had charge of the lamps, said: "They are trying to put the blame on me, but I will not stand for it. I worked for two hours in the lamp room before the fire, but I was not smoking. I didn't have a smoke since last night."

"While I was working in the lamp room two of the deck hands came into the room. I don't know whether or not they were smoking."

GIRL LOSES MOTHER AND BROTHER.

Lucy Hencken, fifteen years old, of No. 169 South Second street, Brooklyn, who lost her mother and brother in the disaster, tells the following thrilling story of her experience:

"When the fire started I was sitting with my mother in the rear of the boat. My brother was on one of the lower decks. As soon as we saw the smoke and heard the cries of 'Fire!' my mother asked me to go below and find my brother.

"When I got down the stairway I found the crushed bodies of three little babies, who had been trampled upon in the terrible scramble. They were all still living, and I carried them up to my mother and put them on her lap. Then I went below again to find my brother. I saw him for a moment, and then he was swept away from me in the surge of men and women who were rushing from the flames.

"I succeeded in getting back to the upper deck, but when I went to look for my mother and the three babies I had rescued they were gone. With my mother and brother gone from me I didn't want to live any longer, so I jumped in. As I was going down a man on the tugboat Theo caught me with a boathook and dragged me on the deck of the boat."

BOY RECOVERS GRANDMOTHER'S BODY.

Charles Schwartz, seventeen years old, of No. 141 East Third street, was saved, but he lost his mother, Mrs. Louise Schwartz, and his grandmother, who was sixty-eight years old. He says of his experience:

"When the fire started I was sitting with my mother and grandmother on the upper deck. My mother ran from me, saying she would look after herself, and bidding me care for my grandmother.

"I carried my grandmother to the rail to await for the approach of

some boat, but suddenly the rail gave way and with scores of others we were dumped into the water. In the struggle of the mass who were fighting to keep up, my grandmother was torn from me and drowned before I could reach her. I swam around, looking for her body, until I was picked up by a tug.

"I was taken ashore to North Brother Island. As I was standing on the shore I saw a number of bodies floating toward me. Thereupon I undressed and swam out. Among the bodies I found that of my grandmother and brought it ashore. I fear my mother was drowned with those who were swept into the water when the rail gave way."

TAKEN FROM STEAMER BY TUG.

Mrs. Kate Gringle, one of the survivors, who resides at No. 439 East Houston street, gave this version of the harrowing story to an Evening World reporter on North Brother Island. She said:

"The fire seemed to spring out of the fore part of the vessel, and the boat went round that the bow of the ship had taken fire. I could see the first evidence of it in the smoke which poured from the forward hold.

"I saw the captain and heard him, too, shouting to the crew to man the fire hose, and he directed the efforts of his men in fighting the fire, which he told them was in the forward hold. I heard that distinctly. I was among the lot taken from the boat by a tug and I never shall forget the moments of anxiety when the tug was coming alongside to take us off.

"I never shall forget the sight of panic-stricken women and children. It was dreadful. I can't tell a connected story. I lost some of my own in the fire. I don't know what has become of them.

"I heard just now that the fire was started in the lamp room and they are all blaming a colored porter for being responsible."

TWO SISTERS RESCUED.

Among those saved were Miss Florence Wels, of No. 507 East Eighty-seventh street, and her sister, Mrs. Nicholas Schumacher, of No. 520 East Eighty-second street. Miss Wels said:

"We were on the stern of the boat and the first we knew of the fire we saw passengers in the water. They had jumped from the forward part of the boat. It seemed only half a minute later that the fire was sweeping over the upper part of the vessel, and we found ourselves in danger of being burned.

"There was a constant stream of passengers jumping from the boat from the time it caught fire until it was beached. Hundreds of them went over the side and must have been swept away before assistance arrived.

"Pretty soon a boat came alongside and my sister and I were thrown onto it. I don't know how. After we had got into the rescue boat some one jumped on top of me and injured my head."

MOTHER AND BROTHER DROWNED IN HIS SIGHT.

John Ell, fourteen years old, one of the survivors of the disaster, gave the following account of his terrible experience, his mother and two brothers being drowned before his eyes, to an Evening World reporter:

"I left the Third street pier at 9 o'clock. I, my mother and my little brother Paul made one of a large party from our district. With us were John Fishman, of No. 401 Fifth street; John Gray, of No. 309 East Fourteenth street; Albert Greenwall, of No. 26 East Fourteenth street, and Otto Hans, of No. 310 East Fourteenth street.

"When we left the pier the deck was packed to the limit of its capacity. The band was playing, the children were frolicking about and we were all having a fine time.

"As we neared Hell Gate children were called down to the lower deck where ice cream and soda water were served.

"The children were falling all over each other in an effort to get to the tables which held the refreshments. With my mother and my little brother Paul I went to the engine room to watch the machinery. I was standing there with John Gray, Albert Greenwall, Otto Hans and a number of children.

"Suddenly and without the least note of warning there was a burst of flame from the furnace room that rushed up through the engine-room and flashed out about us. The flames spread with the rapidity of an explosion, setting fire to the clothing of the women and children who were grouped about the engine-room watching the machinery.

CHILDREN SCREAM IN AGONY.

"My mother's dress and my little brother's clothing caught fire, and I grabbed them and started to rush for the side of the boat. There was the most terrible panic as the burning women and children rushed out among those surrounding the ice cream and soda water tables screaming and yelling with pain.

"In the terrific scramble my mother and little brother were swept from me and carried toward the side where the children and women with their clothes burning had begun to jump into the water. The flames spread in bursts that soon had the entire deck enveloped.

"The crew were helpless to render any assistance or make efforts to check the advance of the fire. We were just passing out through Hell Gate when the fire started. The captain headed the boat toward North Brother

WOMEN LEAP INTO WHIRLPOOLS.

"But in a moment after the flames had burst from the engine-room great numbers began to jump overboard. The women were wild with fright, and snatching their children to them leaped into the whirlpools that carried them toward the rocks on both shores.

"When she was gounded the flames had spread over the entire upper and lower decks. There were only a few spots on the boat untouched by the flames and in these were piled up women who had fainted and falling pinned others to the deck.

"The men from the tugs who could get near the steamboat shouted for those on board to jump, and then the small boats picked them up by the score.

"Many charred and burned bodies were floating in the wake of the General Slocum as she made for North Brother Island.

"I remained on board, as I could not get to the side to leap over because of the mass of wreckage and burned bodies of children piled in front of me. My face and hands, as you see, are badly burned.

"As soon as I reached shore I rushed for the elevated road to hurry and notify my father of the disaster."

SAVES HIS SWEETHEART; LOSES FOUR SISTERS.

With his arm about the sweetheart he had saved, Henry Iden, aged nineteen, of No. 100 East Fourth street, came ashore with the last load of survivors.

His four sisters, he reported, had been lost. They were Annie, aged twelve; Etta, nine; Minnie, seven, and Grace, five. His sweetheart, Amelia Swartz, eighteen years old, of No. 141 East Third street, was broken-hearted at the loss of her mother, Mrs. Louisa Swartz, aged forty-three; her grandmother, Mrs. Anna Elizabeth Burkhardt, aged fifty-nine; her aunt, Mrs. Christina Burkhardt, and the latter's three-months-old daughter, Mabel. An eight-year-old son, Adam, had been seen running about the island seeking wildly for his mother.

HOW HE SAVED HIS SWEETHEART.

"I was sitting on the lower deck with Miss Swartz when the fire broke out," related Iden. "We had smelled smoke for about four minutes, but thought it came from the kitchen, where clam chowder was being cooked.

"Suddenly I noticed people on shore waving their arms, and I could hear them shouting. Then I saw the fire. I got two life-preservers, and put one on Miss Swartz and the other on myself.

"We crowded to the rear and stayed there until the boat went aground, when over we went. The fire was so hot that I kept ducking Miss Swartz under water every minute or so, and did the same myself. After awhile we were pulled aboard a tug."

The faces of both Iden and Miss Swartz were blistered.

PASTOR HAAS SAVED; WIFE AND SON MISSING.

he Rev. Dr. Haas, pastor of St. Mark's, was on the boat with his wife and twelve-year-old boy. His assistant Rev. J. J. Schurz, was also with him. When the panic began Dr. Haas, his wife and boy were thrown overboard. He held on to them for a while and was guiding them to safety when some persons frantically took hold of the group and separated them.

Dr. Haas was rescued at North Brother Island and is now at Lebanon Hospital. He saw no more of his wife and child and it is supposed they were drowned.

According to Pastor Haas the fire started in the kitchen on the lower deck, near the engine-room. He says that he was looking in the door of the kitchen when he saw a big pan of fat on the stove catch fire.

"The cook ran out yelling 'Fire!'" says Mr. Haas, "and almost before I knew it the whole kitchen was ablaze. The flames leaped along the deck, and by the time I got to the forward part the whole side of the boat was in flames."

Joseph Ella, a musician attached to the Metropolitan Opera-House orchestra, came ashore on the steamer Massasoit and told a heart-rending story of the loss of his wife and twelve-year-old daughter, Elsie. He said they were on the lower deck when the upper part of the Gen. Slocum fell and they were pinned to the burning deck. He made every effort to save them and several men helped him, but they were finally all driven back by the flames and forced overboard. There is no doubt in his mind that both mother and child were lost. Ella was frantic with grief.

Over a score of burned and half-drowned persons were rescued by the employees of the De La Vergne Manufacturing Company, which has a big plant at One Hundred and Thirty-eighth street and the East River. As soon as the employees of the factory saw the predicament of the excursionists they put out in small boats and did good rescue work. For over an hour work in the factory was practically at a standstill.